

David Baker House  
Bound Brook Island,  
Wellfleet  
Barnstable County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-709

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THE DAVID BAKER HOUSE

HABS No. MA-709

Location: Bound Brook Island Road on Bound Brook Island.  
Wellfleet.  
Barnstable County, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Judge Francis Biddle.

Present Occupants: Judge and Mrs. Biddle.

Present Use: Summer residence.

Significance: This is a good example, in excellent condition, of a Cape Cod "house and a half" of the late 18th century. It is located within the area of the proposed Cape Cod National Seashore, and is the former residence of Lorenzo Dow Baker, founder of the United Fruit Company. Mr. Lorenzo was born in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, March 15, 1840 (Cape Cod Magazine, July 1915, p. 5). The present owner, Judge Francis Biddle, was the Attorney-General of the United States under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Original and subsequent owners Original owner unknown, see paragraph above.

Date of Erection Verbally dated by the present owner as 1792. Dr. Ernest Allen Connally, HABS Architectural Historian, has dated the house in the late 18th century or the early 19th century.

Architect Unknown.

Builder Unknown.

Original plans None known to exist.

Notes on alterations and additions Two dormers have been added at the south or front; the original kitchen has been converted to a living room with an addition to the west; the west bedroom has been added onto; a kitchen ell has been added to the east end of the house and the upper floor has been altered.

Historical Events Connected with Structure See paragraph on Historical Significance, above.

Sources of Information Present owner.

Likely sources not yet investigated A search could be made of the Wellfleet Town Records and the Barnstable County Records in Barnstable, Mass. for further information relating to old deeds, tax matters, etc. of former owners. The Register of Deeds books are incomplete before 1827 because of a Court House fire in that year.

References

Cape Cod Magazine, July 1915, p. 5.

Prepared by Charles S. Dotts  
Charles S. Dotts, Architect  
HABS Cape Cod Survey I  
July 5, 1960

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural interest and merit This structure is a one and a half story Cape Cod "house and a half" located within the area of the proposed Cape Cod National Seashore. The original floor plan, which can be observed in the house, is typical of similar houses built on Cape Cod during the last part of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th century. Like most of similar houses that exist today on the Cape, this has had additions and alterations.

Condition of fabric Excellent. Judge Biddle has kept the house and outbuildings in good repair.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

Overall dimensions Original house apparently 27' x 28'-6".

Foundations Brick, with wood sills.

Wall construction None of the walls are exposed, however, from looking at other Cape Cod houses and comparing this one with them, this appears to have vertical plank construction, with red painted clapboards on the south side exterior, and on the rear exterior. The ends of the house are shingled. Exterior exposed 3 1/2" south, 4" north, and approximately 5" on the sides.

Porches, stoops Granite semi-circular stoop at south entrance, brick stoops at other entrances. These were apparently added later.

Chimneys One, brick construction, three flues.

Openings - doorways and doors Main door at the south is a 6 paneled wood door with a 5 light transom and with wood pilasters flanking the doorway. The other two exterior doors are also 6 panel. These doors are 1 1/4" to 1 3/4" thick.

windows and shutters First floor has Cape Cod 9/6 lights in double hung sash and second floor has 6/6 and 4/4 lights in double hung sash. Exterior shutter dogs and hangers are in place, but the shutters are missing. There are however, interior sliding "Indian" shutters in the two south windows of the east room, first floor. These slide into wall recesses when not in use.

Roof This house has a gabled, pitched, shingled roof.

Cornice, eaves Box cornice with one piece simulated dentils. Narrow eaves.

dormers Two dormers were added to the south or front side of the house at an unknown date.

Floor plans This structure was apparently a one and a half story Cape Cod "house and a half", originally. This consisted of an entry on the front or south of the house which was flanked on the east by a two window room, and apparently on the west by a one window room. Behind these was the original kitchen and to the east of it were located the buttery and small bed room, or "borning room".

At a later date, an addition was made to the small west room, making the house then a "double house". Later, another addition, of 8 feet was added to the west, and the house now has two windows on the east of entry, and 3 windows on the west. The Biddles, since 1947 added 8 feet to the west of the original kitchen. This area is now used as a living room. A modern kitchen was also added (16 x 20) onto the buttery and small east room.

The second floor has apparently been changed since it was originally built, and now consists of two bedrooms and a bath.

Flooring Random width pine boards, 7" to 15", apparently butt jointed.

Wall and ceiling finish The original part of the house had plastered walls and ceilings, with exception of wainscoting to the window stools, in the east room, west room, and original kitchen. Also the east partition between the kitchen and buttery and small bed room were of vertical boards. Wood paneled walls are located on the west wall of the east room, the east wall of the west room and the south wall of the original kitchen. These are fireplace walls. Plaster and gypsum boards are noted in the partitions of the modern additions.

Doorways and doors 6 panel doors on the first floor with a two panel Greek revival door in the west room.

Trim Decorative mitered trim in the east room, first floor, with plain trim in the west room. Good wood paneling remains on the fireplace walls.

Hardware Mostly modern, with a few old pieces, notably an early lift and latch bar.

Lighting Electric.

Heating, fireplaces Three brick fireplaces, in the first floor east room, west room, and original kitchen. The west room has a cast iron Franklin fireplace.

#### SITE

Orientation This house faces south in typical Cape Cod style on the lee slope of a hill in a very impressive setting.

Enclosures Post and rail fence.


Outbuildings Former barn on the property is now used as a guest house, located about 50 yards northeast of the house; former stable is now Judge Biddle's study, located about 30 yards north of house. A small studio or house about 15 feet west of the main house is believed by the owner to date from the 17th century. This house deserves further study.

Landscaping Excellent lawn, shrubbery and trees, well trimmed. Informal planting.

#### References

Original HABS study by Dr. Ernest Allen Connally.  
Measured drawings HABS team, Cape Cod Survey I, Eastham Field Office, 1960.

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Charles S. Dotts, Architect  
HABS Cape Cod Survey I  
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